
The Catalyst



The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks

Summer 2001

Volume 5 No. 1

Mott Training Center Expands Interpretive Courses

**By Alphonso P. Pepito
Training Specialist**

Over the past couple of years, a lot of work has gone into updating and improving the department's interpretive training. New programs have been developed and several courses have been updated to fit the changing trends that have been occurring in interpretation. This work has been taken on by the Interpretation Performance Improvement Team whose members are Donna Pozzi, Broc Stenman, Al Pepito, Wes Chapin, Jonathan Williams, Michael Green, Elizabeth Hammack, and Dave Gould. (Past members – Carol Nelson, Jeanne Ekstrom).

Recreation, Cultural and Natural Resource Interpretation will be offered during this fiscal year.

Recreation Resource is being revamped to address innovative approaches to reach recreation-oriented park users. The team of Mary Stokes, Connie Breakfield and Al Pepito are designing the program to enable interpreters to strengthen the connection between interpretation, education, and recreational opportunities in parks.

Cultural Resource Interpretation training has become very popular due to the hard work of Glen Burch and Mike Tucker. In refining this offering, this year the class is scheduled to coincide with Christmas in the Adobes so that the class could see the way living history and the use of historic dance and music can be interpreted to the public.

Two of our courses have been developed in conjunction with the several other agencies. In Southern California, Interpreting to Diverse Audiences is coordinated by Wes Chapin, Channel Coast District, will be offered for the second time. The Northern California class, Skills for Interpreting to Children is coordinated by Tom Lindberg and takes place at a variety of educational and interpretive sites.

Interpretive Program Coordination and Supervision is intended for District teams that are responsible for interpretive programming, training, planning and evaluation. District interpretation teams are encouraged to take advantage of this training and team building opportunity. There is still space available for this class, contact me at the Training Center.

Finally, Training for Interpretive Trainers has been established to develop and present local training for employees involved in interpretation. The Department is making a concerted effort to enhance interpretation training at the District level.

The Mott Training Center is encouraging districts to look at the courses being offered and take advantage of these opportunities. There are still slots available for several of the courses. Feel free to contact me for further information or if you have any questions.



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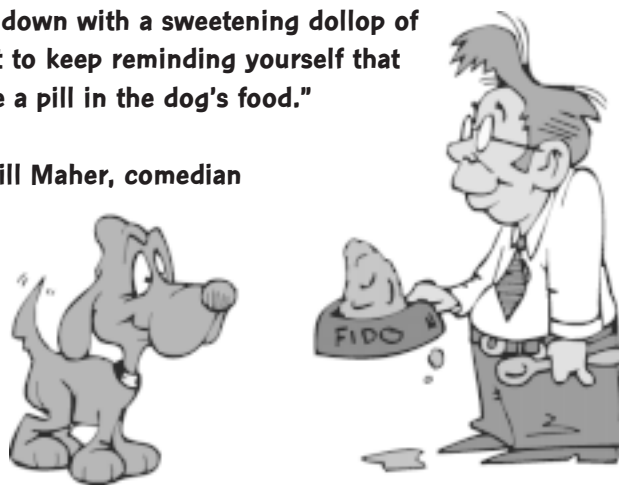
Catalyst welcomes your original articles of any length! Or, send copies of stories published elsewhere that you think our readers will appreciate. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time.

We **really** appreciate articles submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most formats of DOS/Windows disks. Printed manuscripts, facsimile or phone messages are also accepted. Please advise if you would like your diskette returned, otherwise we will recycle it in our office to save postage.

Illustrations are strongly encouraged. Drawings, graphs or other illustrations may be submitted on disk or hard copy. Black & white glossy photos are preferred; color prints or slides are usually acceptable. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly.

"I've learned that if you really want to get a message across, it has to go down with a sweetening dollop of comedy. You've got to keep reminding yourself that your point has to be a pill in the dog's food."

— Bill Maher, comedian



The Catalyst Committee

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From the Editor

Thank you for finding the time to read Catalyst in the midst of a busy summer season! We realize that this is just one of about 16 different newsletters that shows up in your in-box. But we do our best to keep you up to speed in this fascinating field. On the very next page you will find a few morsels to get you started. As usual you'll find the Master Interpreter presiding over page 5 offering gratuitous advice to the interpretively challenged.



Of course there are a lot of other interpreters across the country facing the same challenges we do every day. The first couple of stories come from far away but should resonate with many of us. Paul Durham, a park manager at Deep Creek Lake in Maryland, sends us "Of Fast Food and Interpretation." You can reach Paul at moonstruck@mail2.qcnet.net. This story also appeared in the NAI Region 2 newsletter. Next comes "Education or Entertainment" by Larry Mink who works for Idaho Dept. of Parks and Recreation. He can be reached at lmink@idpr.state.id.us. This story also appeared in "Mooselips" the NAI Region 7 newsletter.

Surely you've heard of our Department's focus on reaching out to urban audiences. Again, we are not alone. Dr. Michael Legg checks-in from Nacogdoches, Texas with a timely piece titled "Hit 'em Where They Are." He teaches interpretation at Steven F. Austin State University and would love to hear from you at mlegg@sfasu.edu. It also appeared in Visions, the NAI Region 6 newsletter.

If museum pests are bugging you, you'll want to read "Now Being Served" by Derek Acomb. He is a Fisheries Biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game. He can be reached at dacomb@dfg.ca.gov. This story also appeared in the NAI Region 9 newsletter.

Every now and then someone submits a piece of poetry to Catalyst. However when we have to make the tough decisions about what will actually fit in an issue, the poems rarely make it. But we are actually bringing you

two poems in this issue, the first on page 11. DIS Gail Sevens brought it to our attention. It is by Rick Deats, a docent at Año Nuevo State Reserve.

On page 12 we introduce the eager new interpretive team at the Southern Service Center. Karen Beery and Nancy Mendez would like you to know a little about what they do there. You can contact them at (619) 688-6105. Jessica Watrous updates us on the Volunteers in Parks Program, noting that 2001 is the International Year of Volunteers. Get the whole story on page 13. Jessica can be reached at (916) 653-9069.

The second part of Wes Chapin's series on Intelligent Design appears on page 14. Wes can be reached at calparks@rain.org. I was a bit surprised his first article did not stir-up more discussion. Still, we thought it would be worthwhile to bring you another different perspective on this complex issue. It falls on page 16 and comes to us from Pat Silovsky of Milford Nature Center in Junction City, Kansas. While Pat's perspective is decidedly different from Wes' they both really agree that the critical point is to respect your audience.

The poem on page 17 is just for fun. Thanks to Ranger Steve Jones who penned this twenty years ago this summer (but it still rings true). There's one more piece on the lighter side, "Count on Crows" appearing on page 18. It was written by Ian Frazier of DoubleTake Magazine. Our thanks for their permission to reprint it.

Finally some bad news, that just might not be all that bad. Greg Holm of Redwood National Park discusses the recently high death rates of gray whales and ponders what might be the cause. Thanks to Alan Wilkinson for bringing this one to our attention. California Tapestry is on summer vacation but will return in the next issue of Catalyst.

That's all, so get busy. I know that sometimes in late August you can feel like a salmon swimming upstream. Keep at it, summer's almost over and the work you're doing is very important. Hang in there!

Brian Cahill, Editor

What's Up?



Interpreters' Resources

Telescope Workshop

A Telescopes In Education Teacher Training Workshop is scheduled for August 17 and 18, 2001. The two day training will consist of morning and afternoon sessions with telescopes and CCD camera, and an evening visit to Mount Wilson. The following day will be advanced concepts.

The workshop will be in Santa Monica, CA. Please confirm your interest in attending with Joe Wise jwise@kmsi.org or Mary Cragg mccragg@earthlink.net.



NIW 2001

The 2001 National Interpreters Workshop in Des Moines will offer some of the best interpretive training available anywhere, flavored with the Midwest's natural beauty and down-on-the-farm sensibility. Picture yourself in Iowa next November 6 - 10. Earlybird rates are available for registrations received prior to August 26. The regular registration deadline at the normal rate is October 7. See www.interpnet.com

Visit us on the Web!
Direct Links to these
items can be found at:
www.statepark.org/catalyst

Recycled Products

The Amazing Recycled Products Company offers pencils, pens, tote bags, shirts, clipboards, thermometers, rain gauges, crayons in animal shapes and buttons, rulers and other items for give aways. The nice thing is they are made from recycled materials. Look at their information. It may be a good way to teach by doing. Phone (800) 241-2174 or www.amazingrecycled.com.

Kids & the Environment

A recent survey of kids and their anxieties and concerns brought out some points that should be of interest to this group. "Children are concerned that their play spaces will be taken away. Though no specific question was asked about the environment, loss of outdoor spaces and pollution emerged as a recurring preoccupation and concern for children aged 9-11. Over a third of children asked about their worries for the future took pictures related to pollution and the environment. And, nearly 65 percent expressed concerns that outdoor places would disappear due to development or neglect." The full article is here: <http://pnnonline.org/education/sesame060101.adp>

Web Design

Check out "Don't Make Me Think" by Steve Krug. The principles in this new book should be familiar to most interpreters, but you will appreciate how he applies them to Web design. A quick, easy read, only \$35 at bookstores everywhere.

Biology in Practice

The Society for Conservation Biology has launched Conservation Biology in Practice, a new magazine designed for conservation practitioners and policymakers who are short on time but long on information needs. Its purpose is to put conservation science into practice and conservation practice into science. In each issue, you will find new conservation research, innovative case studies, hands-on tools and techniques, and practical resources. For subscription information or to order a sample copy contact: Conservation Biology in Practice, Dept. of Zoology, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-1800. Phone (206) 616-2958 or visit www.cbinpractice.org.

New Joseph Cornell Books

Joseph Cornell, author of "Sharing Nature with Children," has recently written two new environmental education books, "John Muir: My Life with Nature" and "With Beauty Before Me: An Inspirational Guide for Nature Walks." To find out more about these books and other exciting resources go to www.sharingnature.com.

Chiropterophiles

For all of you who interpret bats, there is a new resource available from USFWS. Bats of the United States is a new, 64-page booklet available for free from Robert Currie, USFWS, 160 Zillicoa Street, Asheville, NC 28801 or by e-mail robert_currie@fws.gov.



Dear Master Interpreter

Dear Master Interpreter,

You answered a flag question last issue, so maybe you can help with my problem. We fly the flag

every day at our visitor center. Since it is quite windy here at the coast, the flags do not last long. We continually replace our worn flags but I am ashamed to admit the old ones are just going on a shelf at the visitor center. I know they are supposed to be burned or something but I am unsure just how to do it. Do I need to contact our local Veteran's group?

Shelving Old Glory

Dear Glory,

Sure, a Veteran's group could probably help you out. But how about this? Do scout troops ever come into your visitor center? I'll bet some of them even ask to do service projects. Try asking a scout troop to properly retire your old flags for you. Not every troop might be up to the job, but if you find a well organized group of scouts they could probably handle that task for you easily. If in doubt, watch for a group wearing official uniforms.

MI



Dear Master Interpreter,

I would like to get fur pelts of some of the animals in our park to use for hands-on interpretation. Do I need to find road-killed animals or is there any other place to get furs?

Furry

Dear Furry,

Pelts are not hard to get. There are actually fur companies that will sell you anything you need. Sometimes you will find a fur trader at a gun show at your local fairgrounds.

The catch comes later when you bring out this beautiful pelt on your nature walk. Some cute little kid with big brown eyes is sure to look up at you and ask "Did you kill that animal just to get this fur?" If you want to be able to confidently answer "No," you'd better stick with road-kills.

Pelts from a fur dealer are often quite a bit cheaper than having your own specimen tanned, but it does leave you with a bit of a moral dilemma.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

I design the weekly park activity schedules and sometimes other little brochures for our park. I am always needing clip-art illustrations. There are a lot of good, free graphics on the internet. Do you know of any Web sites that have illustrations particularly suitable for park purposes?

Graphic Girl

Dear Graphic,

Don't make the mistake that many people do, assuming that anything you find on the internet is fair game. Always check to see if there is any sort of stated license attached to it. Unless some explicit license expressly states that the image is available for free use by anyone, assume that the image is copyrighted and you may not use it without permission of the copyright owner.

Also Web graphics often are low resolution and don't print all that well. You might be better off buying your own clip-art. There are several artists that specialize in natural and cultural history images for interpreters. Look for their ads in the National Association for Interpretation directory.



MI

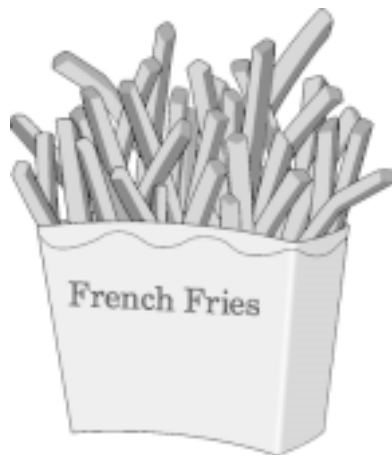
Of Fast Food and Interpretation

by Paul Durham

While on vacation recently, I had the opportunity to tour several historic sites in the southwest. One was at a well known Anasazi ruin and the other was a restored fort that was a major trading center for the fur trade during the early 1800s. This was my time, and I was simply enjoying being a visitor, taking in a few interpretive programs by the ranger interpreters and discovering the spirit of the sites.

The first tour was well scripted and delivered by the ranger, with the appropriate pauses and stops for reflection and questions along the path through the ruins. We were encouraged to ponder the mysterious fate of those who once lived there, their lives and challenges, and where they may have gone.

I soon discovered that the group I was with had been provoked and were seeking additional insight from the ranger on the life of the mysterious Anasazi. Sadly, she struggled with anything that departed from the script and was unprepared to flow where the visitors and their questions wanted to go.



Just like a fast food chain restaurant, this interpretive fare was prepared correctly and consistent with the reputation of the company, had been served up many times before, and was simple and basic. However, it lacked the flavor or variety often needed by the discriminating customer. Sadly, the group went away unfulfilled, wishing that the menu could have been expanded to meet their needs, or perhaps that the cook would have tried out an exciting new dish on them.

My visit to the other site was quite different. Quietly, and almost secretly, the costumed living history interpreter prepared us for his self-described "reality tour." We explored the back passages and rooms of the fort, listened to him talk (in hushed tones) of the truth about the doctor, the living conditions that were tolerated out of a need for safety behind the adobe walls, the almost caste-like hierarchy of those who traded there, and the harsh realities of living hundreds of miles from the nearest city.

Stepping between first and third person narrative, he danced and flowed with the needs of the audience and delivered a thoroughly enjoyable program. We often stood in as his third person partner, assisting with some task that he was demonstrating, or more often as the butt of his subtle but thoroughly enjoyable humor. We were not eating fast food here. We were feasting on gourmet cuisine!

Think about your interpretive menu as you plan for the coming season. Are you preparing yourself to be flexible and engaging, inviting your audience to a true dinner and a dance? Or will you stick to the same old time tested, but safe, fast food script? Consider pushing a little on the edges of your envelope of comfort. Can you do more to engage your audience in an interpretive "dinner date," and aid them in their discovery of the gourmet meaning behind your message?



Education or Entertainment?

By Larry Mink

Sam Ham preaches the four foundations of successful interpretation with the first one being "enjoyable." Someone coined the term "interpretainment," meaning entertaining interpretation. The non-captive recreational audience that visits our parks is looking for more than "just the facts." They want to be entertained.

This concept really hit home again this summer. Here are few examples. Imagine a beautiful natural state park in the central Idaho mountains, 150 campsites that are full, the weather is great, it is mid-summer. The park has a full slate of interpretive activities that are promoted well. The campfire program on Friday night was about coyotes. It was a well done program presented by a veteran seasonal interpreter. Eighteen people attended this program. Remember that there are about 500-600 people packed into this compact campground which equates to less than 4% of the visitors attending this program.

The next night at the very same campground amphitheater is a local group of folk singers that play great music. Same place, same amount of people in the park, great weather, etc. One hundred and fifty people attend this program. Hmmm, I wonder why the difference in attendance? Entertainment, it's obvious. Nature interpretation, even at a natural park, is not a big draw unless it is deemed entertainment.



At another Idaho state park, Thursday nights are scheduled as classic movie night. No education goals here, just pure entertainment. One night this summer the movie, *Ma and Pa Kettle Go Camping*, was shown — 54 folks showed up for this one. The next night, "Wildlife of the Park" was on the agenda and only 32 attended this program. Nature interpretation loses out to entertainment again. I'm sure that many interpreters have had the same experiences.

Scott Mair, an interpretive specialist from Alberta, has years of experience proving that song, music, skits, etc. will draw many more people to programs than the traditional nature interpretation program. Scott's programs in Alberta jumped from 15% of park campers to 70-80% of campers using theatrics as an interpretive tool.

Personally, this is at times frustrating. Should we be training our natural resource interpreters more in the art of "a little song, a little dance, a little seltzer down your pants" more than resource knowledge? Or should we ignore entertainment and the numbers of folks that attend our programs and concentrate on those 10-15% of park visitors that come to programs?

A combination of education and entertainment is the probable answer, but how many entertainment skills should we expect interpreters, especially seasonal interpreters, to possess? I certainly don't have the answers, but would love to hear other comments and opinions on the education versus entertainment conflict.

Hit 'Em Where They Are

By Dr. Michael Legg
Stephen F. Austin University
Nacogdoches, Texas

"Hit 'em where they ain't." To baseball fans this Yogi-ism, which is actually attributable to Casey Stengel, is the key to getting base hits. In interpretive programming it is a guarantee of failure. What we should be most interested in is: HITTING 'EM WHERE THEY ARE.

"Do they search you when you come in the parking lot?" This is an actual question posed to one of my graduate students when she was conducting research at a Fort Worth community center during a focus group discussion with Hispanic youth. The focus group was part of a study of racial and ethnic minority prefer-



Not only was this a child who had never visited a nature center before, but unlike the vast majority of interpreters, this was a child who endured searches on a regular basis. This was a child who was searched on his way into school every morning. This was

Granted, perhaps this is an extreme example, but perhaps not. There are many different kinds of "urban" kids. Some are like those little science nerds that are in our nature centers every time we open the doors.

However, I think it would be safe to say that most are not what we would call nature-oriented. The natural world is an alien, often even frightening environment for them. They are as uncomfortable walking on the hiking trails of a nature center as I am driving on the downtown streets of Houston or Dallas.

But these differences are not reason enough to write off this segment of the population. This segment of our population, by virtue of their intrinsic value as humans, deserves the same opportunities as the kid who knows all the answers to the "Identify the Tracks" game at your nature center. So, how are we going to reach them?

They are as uncomfortable walking on the hiking trails of a nature center as I am driving on the downtown streets.

ences and barriers to participation at the Fort Worth Nature Center.

"Do they search you?!" What kind of dumb question is that? Of course not!

What would possess this teen to ask if he would be 'searched' at a nature center? It was a question she pondered for a long time before finally coming to an understanding.

a child who was searched on his way into the community center every afternoon — a community center from which the graduate student had to be escorted back and forth to her parked car by a city policeman whose only duty that evening was the community center.

Her understanding was, "this child lived in a completely different world."



Here are some ideas, some reasonable, some maybe outrageous. Following Freeman Tilden's fourth principle, I intend to provoke thought rather than to give instruction.

1. Hit them where they are. Most research has shown that urban dwellers don't even know where your site is, and even if they did they often would not have the means to get there. That means we have to do what most successful retailers figure out. We must deliver our product to

boring. They express a strong desire for fun, athletic, and often competitive activities.

Tilden's first principle says if interpretation does not relate to something within the personality or the experiences of the visitor it will be sterile. If they can't find something interesting to them in your programs, they won't attend. So, try something fun, athletic and competitive. It can still be environmentally oriented for you purists out there.



So, you've tried some new program ideas and nothing happened. I suggest you keep trying. This is one game that is not going to get easier.

their choice of locations. This means not only going into their schools but also going into their neighborhoods with programs that address their interests. They are much more interested in programs that positively impact the environment in their neighborhood than in finding out it is "ok" to touch a snake. Whoever came up with the idea that humans should touch snakes anyway?

2. Don't bring your tennis racket to a baseball game. Our urban audience is not necessarily interested in the exact same game that we are. Urban dwellers list athletics and games and sports as interesting and often think that nature walks and such might be just a little



3. Don't expect to get a hit every time you swing the bat, but don't expect to ever get a hit if you don't swing at all. So, you've tried some new program ideas and nothing happened. I suggest you keep trying. This is one game that is not going to get easier. The next generation of pitchers will be somewhat harder to hit than this one. Substantial research exists to show that most of a child's values about the natural environment are absorbed from his or her parents. The next generation urban audience will be even further removed from the natural environment than the current one. Try to pick an easy pitch to hit. That is, look for the urban audience that is easiest for you and start there.

4. You might consider the thought of a designated hitter. This is especially true of programs directed at specific ethnic or social groups. In focus groups conducted for the National Park Service and others, minority groups indicated they would be more receptive to programs presented by a member of their own group.

Sometimes I think we need to consider hiring an interpreter with whom the audience can more easily identify. When I was in Taiwan recently, I toured a large national museum. I was delighted when I found out my guide was an English lady who had lived for years in Taiwan. She not only knew about the museum, she spoke my language and understood my culture. Surely we should consider doing the same for our visitors.

5. Finally, never try to relate everything in interpretation to a baseball game!

Now Being Served: Museum Exhibits

By Derek Acomb
Fisheries Biologist
Department of Fish and Game

Your collection of preserved animals and skins should last forever, right? Without preventive maintenance your favorite specimens may be eaten right before your very eyes!

If you have ever returned to your insect collection or a preserved animal and found it missing or full of holes then you have probably witnessed the voracious appetite of the dermestid beetle. If you haven't yet experienced an infestation of dermestid beetles then your worry-free days are numbered.

Dermestid beetles are insects of the order Coleoptera and of the family Dermestidae. There are 15 genera and 123 species, widely distributed in North America. You might know these beetles by their common names which include: Black Carpet Beetle, Buffalo Bug, Skin Beetle, and Bacon Beetle.

They come in varying sizes and colors. They range from 1 to 12 mm in size. They can have hair or scales ranging from brown to black, sometimes arranged in patterns. Dermestid beetles feed on dead insects, fur, feathers, dried skin and meats, cereal products, and "natural" fibers such as wool, leather, and silk (White, 1983). Their eating habits have earned them the title of an economically significant insect.



Now before you vow to kill all dermestids consider that their voracious appetite can be very useful. No alternate method compares to the efficiency of a dermestid beetle when it comes to cleaning bones and skeletons. The larvae of dermestid beetles will clean all of the soft tissues from bones in a matter of months for large specimens and sometimes minutes for small specimens. Why scrape bones or treat them with caustic chemicals, let the insects do the dirty work!

To check for an infestation, look under your preserved specimen with a low power hand lens. Do you see any dead beetles or perhaps a pile of "saw dust?" These are pretty good indicators of a dermestid beetle infestation. If you still aren't convinced, look at nearby windows and sills. Here you may find live and dead adults flying to escape towards the bright outdoor light. Why wait for a devastating infestation to treat your

collection? A safe and rather economical treatment can be as close as your freezer.

A recently published study says that treating dermestid beetles with a six hour exposure to -20°C (4°F) will kill all developmental stages of dermestid beetles. The author cautions that larger mounted specimens may be insulated to the cold temperatures, and extra time should be added to allow the entire specimen reach a stable -20°C before treatment begins.

Many domestic freezers are capable of reaching below -20°C , so you should not need fancy cryogenic equipment. Remember that a small bird might take only six hours, but a raccoon or larger mammal will take longer. Err on the side of caution when determining treatment times. Make room in your freezer so you can stop serving stuffed mammals and birds to the beetles.

Nothing

by Rick Deats

It means eyes squinting into the afternoon sun,
while the face of a smiling stranger
tells you that a piece of your heart has found
new ears and a new home.
That smile buries itself deep within you,
And you can see nothing else.

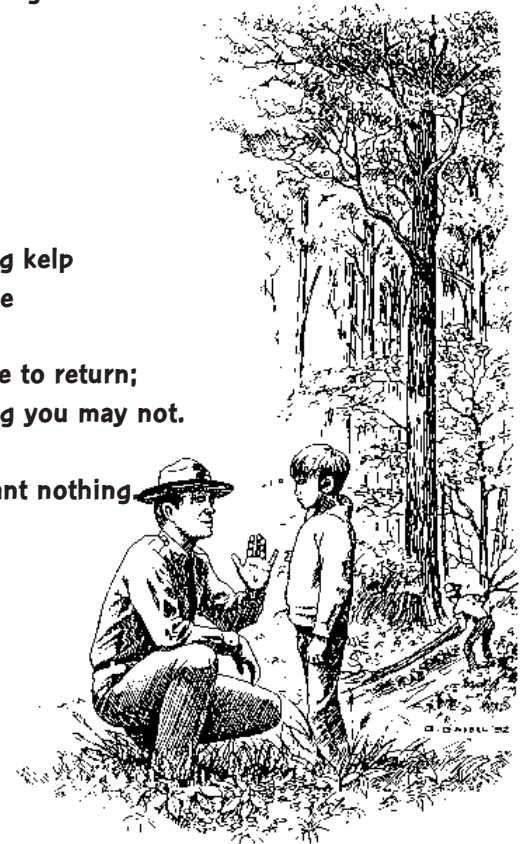
It means rounding a large dune as the sudden intake
of a trailing breath tells you
a new horizon has begun to expand
in the lungs of a child.
The one you thought would be trouble.
Nothing can match the silence as you expand together.

It means that like some kind of naturalist sorcerer
You can animate a small white stone with only
the tip of your tongue and the taste of a dream.
If you conjure well, its cousins dance magically
between 40 rows of teeth.
And nothing will ever taste sweeter.

It means the warm surprise of a small hand touching
your leg for reassurance as you wander.
The child is not surprised to discover that you
are neither her mother nor her father.
But you are shaken because nothing has ever
touched your soul as deeply.

It means the scent of sulphurous legions of drying kelp
joining forces with the wind to lay merciless siege
to your senses for hours after you've gone.
Nothing breaks the siege faster than your promise to return;
But nothing breaks your heart more than knowing you may not.

Yeah, I know. Once you could have sworn it meant nothing.



Interpretation on the Road via the Southern Service Center

By Karen Beery and Nancy Mendez

As convenient as drive-through windows, as luxurious as full-service gas stations, interpretive assistance has finally arrived at the Southern Service Center! To find out more, follow the signs...

Passing Lane Ahead

Nancy Mendez, former Curator II Angeles District/Topanga Sector, and Karen Beery, former Guide II, Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, began our new assignment as Interpreter IIs on February 5, 2001. We are part of a major growth spurt for the Southern Service Center (SSC for short), which currently employs 55 Landscape Architects, Engineers, Architects, Historians, Resource Ecologists, Archaeologists and Administrative Staff. (For you trivia buffs, 10% of the current SSC staff are now named Karen. For lack of better nicknames, we have been designated numerically based on order hired. In other words, of the six Karens, I am K-5. Bet you can guess where this is headed. If we think of it on a statewide basis, I could also go by KB South—Karen Barrett, Interpreter II, Interpretive Program & Planning, Sacramento, would then be KB North. Ah, so many Karens, so little time...)

Offramp

Our office is in San Diego, just off Friars Road in an industrial park nestled into the convergence of the

805 and 8 freeways, tucked in the shadow of Qualcomm Stadium - a great location for sports fans: Go, Padres! From here we provide assistance on a variety of interpretive projects for Angeles, Channel Coast, Colorado Desert, Inland Empire, Orange Coast, and San Diego Districts.

Gas, Food, and Lodging

Our assignments are organized as part of a six-month work plan which is determined by the requests submitted and prioritized by each of the six southern park districts. Last month we had a chance to review close to 100 projects that were submitted. Although many came *without* specific requests for interpretive assistance, we still found our interpretive plate to be full. We are currently involved with a variety of projects that include general plan amendments, interpretive plans, design planning and development for visitor centers, wayside exhibits, interpretive panels and publications. As projects continue to be developed in your districts, keep looking for ways to include interpretation!

Slow Down, Curves...

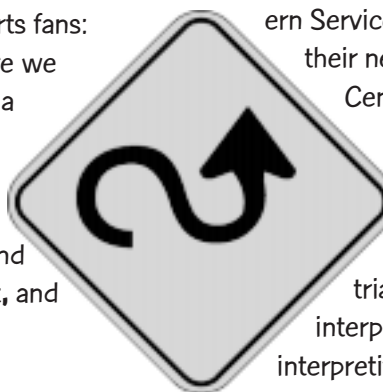
We continue to try to keep our production curve in pace with the learning curve. As we do so we hope to share some of what we are learning as we tackle some of the chal-

lenges ahead. We hope to be a resource as well as an information conduit for all of you. As the Northern Service Center settles into their new home and the Central Service Center gets on its feet, we hope to begin and maintain an ongoing dialog (or would that be a trialog?) about all matters interpretive. How are those interpretive contracts working? Who are the good, the bad, and the bungling among the outside resources?

...and Slots Ahead

We've had a chance to explore a few of the parks together, our first being Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. We were impressed with the use of space outside of the Visitor Center: an archaeology pit that is under (no pun intended) development and the school group staging area which incorporates animal tracks onto the walking pavers, a wonderful interpretive aid. The mammoth "track" is HUGE! Brian and Joanie Cahill were our gracious hosts, and actually got us out on a hike to "The Slot." No, it's not a gambling hall in the desert. To these road warriors, it felt like a waterless slide where one propels oneself through a seemingly endless labyrinth of desert, hugged by the narrowness a sandstone-like canyon. Did anyone get a picture of this?

Exit Here



California State Parks

Volunteers In Parks Program Update

By Jessica Watrous
Volunteer Program Coordinator

The **2000 annual reports** for the volunteer program have been collected and summarized. Heather Fargo, Volunteer Program Manager, has completed a synopsis, which will be mailed to district superintendents very soon.

Overall, the program has more volunteers than in 1999, but the total number of volunteer hours is down by almost 200,000 hours (about 20%). While some of this can be attributed to more accurate record keeping, several districts reported the reduction was due to inadequate staff time to recruit and supervise volunteers.

The Independent Sector has calculated the dollar value of volunteer time at \$15.39 per hour for 2000, putting the value of State Parks volunteer time at \$12,290,592.51. (wow!) If you would like a copy of the summary, please call 916-653-8819.



The United Nations has designated 2001 as the **International Year of Volunteers**. This is an excellent opportunity for volunteer coordinators to recruit and recognize volun-

teers. The International Year of Volunteers has a Web site, www.iyv.org, that includes a general overview and has many specific ideas about special events, as well as how to recruit, retain and recognize volunteers.

"Societies need to recognize and promote volunteerism as a valuable activity. They must facilitate the work of volunteers, and encourage volunteer action at home and abroad."

— Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General

Information is available for you to download and use in your own program. For example, there is a very nice recognition certificate accessed through Acrobat Reader that you can use for your volunteers. What a great opportunity to recognize our volunteers.

The Debate over “Intelligent Design”

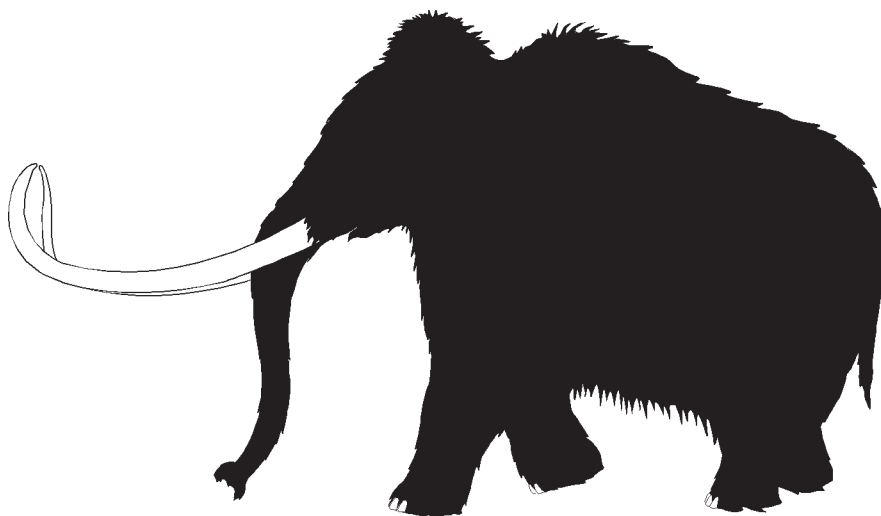
By Wes Chapin,
Channel Coast DIS

In my last article, we began to look at a controversy that Americans are becoming increasingly aware of, with the notable exception of California State Park interpreters. Teachers have been censured or even fired for presenting the “wrong” side of this controversy to their students. The debate is heating up, as you’ll discover by visiting some of the Web sites where the issue is discussed.

The subject of the controversy is origins, or how the universe and life began and change. The predominant explanation is commonly referred to as “evolution.” Generally, proponents of this view, including those who develop California’s science standards for public elementary schools, define evolution as an undirected, mechanistic process acting primarily through random genetic mutations and natural selection.

The main alternative explanation of origins is variously referred to as creation science, creationism, or more recently as intelligent design, the theory that the universe and the life it contains display the unmistakable mark of a purposeful, intelligent designer or creator.

As I’ve said, this subject is being hotly debated, even internationally. Yet, in my experience, most interpreters in our department either aren’t aware of the controversy or believe it is unimportant or irrelevant to our work. Many in the latter group hold opinions about the design side of the



issue that range from mild amusement to outright hostility. But the general impression seems to be one of indifference, which is curious to me for several reasons.

Most interpreters I’ve known have a deep appreciation for the natural and cultural worlds that we interpret. If an alternative explanation of how life began and changes was receiving increasing attention even within the scientific community, wouldn’t we want to know more about it?

This is a fascinating debate, the implications of which reach into every area we interpret. Even the social sciences, e.g., anthropology and archaeology, are strongly influenced by the evolutionary paradigm. Considering alternative views is a great way to sharpen your critical thinking skills.

For another thing, we interpreters frequently interact with the educational community, and since the schools are becoming one of the main arenas in which the origins

debate is being waged, don’t we have some obligation to our education partners to be minimally conversant with an issue that is impacting them?

We all know our audiences are becoming more diverse. This means we interpreters have a greater responsibility to be sensitive to the sincerely held beliefs of the members of those audiences. To remain ignorant of the design theory of origins that at least two-thirds of Americans believe ought to be taught in public school science classes alongside the evolutionary one, while we continue to present the evolution side of the issue, is to be insensitive to a large segment of our visitors. It may even verge on arrogance.

Finally, our department has said that we interpreters have a responsibility to present accurate programs (the “A” in “RAPPORT”). In cases of controversy or where more than one explanation for what is being interpreted is possible, we must be careful to present a balanced program, avoiding any tendency to be dogmatic, regardless of our personal

biases. In the case of origins, there is clearly more than one side to the subject.

One Interpreter's "Evolution"

My own interest in the origins controversy began several years ago when I began to come across articles that were critical of the standard evolutionary ideas I'd been taught in school. I was surprised to learn that much of the criticism was coming not from those who objected to evolutionary theory on religious grounds but from scientists—even evolutionists—whose research had caused

The philosophy of naturalism, which holds that everything can be explained without the need to resort to supernatural causes, dominates the scientific and educational communities. 72% of members of the National Academy of Sciences in the physical and biological sciences who responded to a recent survey described themselves as overtly atheistic.

Some are beginning to question the ability of scientists who philosophically reject any possibility of supernatural explanations of evidence to be able to conduct truly objective

that allow it to self-organize. So the debate continues, and it shows no sign of being resolved any time soon.

"So What?"

Interpreters who are willing to lay aside their preconceived notions and fairly investigate the arguments and supporting evidence put forth by both sides of this debate will find a wealth of new information to enrich and enliven their programs. By moving beyond dogmatically presenting the evolution side of the debate (which interpreters tend to do, often unwittingly) to a more balanced presentation, we will better serve our visitors by showing increased sensitivity to their diverse views and by helping them to sharpen their own critical thinking skills. Ultimately, we will help them expand their awareness and appreciation for the amazing complexity and beauty of this universe in which we live.

We all know our audiences are becoming more diverse. This means we interpreters have a greater responsibility to be sensitive to the sincerely held beliefs of the members of those audiences.

them to question Darwin's ideas. Since then I have learned that many of the evidences that were used (and still are, in some cases) to give the impression that evolution is more fact than theory have, in fact, been proven false.

But the thing that really shook my paradigm was the realization of how much one's personal philosophy or "world view" affects how one evaluates evidence and makes decisions (ok, so I'm a little slow in some things). It turns out that the debate over theories of origins is less about science versus religion, as some would frame the debate, and more about clashing worldviews.

research. This concern has grown over the last 20-30 years as scientific discoveries in fields as divergent as cosmology and microbiology seem to point to purposeful design and away from random chance as the primary organizing principle in the universe. The incredible interdependent complexity of the living cell and the recent discovery that the universe had a beginning (and therefore a Beginner?) are just two of many fascinating examples.

Even materialistic evolutionists acknowledge that the universe and life display the appearance of design. But they counter the design hypothesis by arguing that matter must possess some as-yet-undiscovered properties

Resources about origins are increasing almost daily. Here are a few starters:

Evolution: A Theory in Crisis

by Michael Denton

Darwin on Trial

by Phillip Johnson

Climbing Mount Improbable

by Richard Dawkins

Finding Darwin's God

by Kenneth R. Miller

🐾 Access Research Network, "Providing accessible information on science, technology, and society." www.arn.org

🐾 Institute for Creation Research, "A Christ-focused creation ministry." www.icr.org

🐾 National Center for Science Education, "Defending the teaching of evolution in public schools." www.natcenscienced.org

Evolution: Are We Saying What We Mean?

By Pat Silovsky, Milford Nature Center, Junction City, Kansas

Maybe it's because I'm from Kansas, but it seems like we can't get away from the topic of evolution these days. The Kansas State Board of Education decision to de-emphasize evolution in public schools definitely led to many heated conversations and a lot of ridicule from the rest of the civilized world. Maybe this wasn't all bad, as it did make me take a closer look at the topic. In fact, a discussion centering on evolution and how naturalists deal with it even became part of our annual Kansas Naturalists get-together this fall. I thought some good points were brought up, worthy of repeating here.

It seems that the root of our problem (to use or not to use the "e" word, that is the question!) is that science teachers, naturalists included, have done a lousy job of teaching "science" to students. Have we ever stopped and asked a group visiting our site, "What is science?" Science is partially defined as the study or collection of knowledge in an orderly fashion. The information or fact is collected, and the scientist uses certain rules to help place these facts into a framework that makes sense. Rules, laws, and principles are developed as scientists begin to see patterns or relationships among a number of isolated facts. It is the method of collecting information and the way it is organized that make a field of study a science.

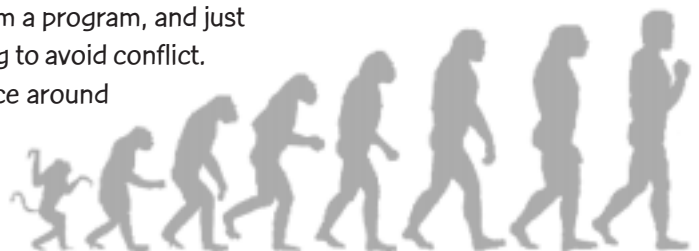
If the rules are not testable or if no rules are used, it is NOT science. Questions concerning morals, value judgements, social issues, and attitudes cannot be answered using the scientific method. With this in mind, we can say that evolution and creationism have nothing to do with one another. One is based on the scientific method and one on faith. If we can't disprove something, it isn't science. We don't want to fall into the trap of teaching our children that science can be anything we believe! Beware of the pseudosciences, such as scientific creationism, which use the language of science but not the methods of science.

Evolution is now regarded by scientists as a biological principle. One **accepts** evolution just as one would accept gravity or any other principle of science, but one does not **believe** in evolution. Therefore, we shouldn't be afraid to use the term 'evolution' because it shouldn't offend anyone if they understand SCIENCE. Consider this, "If students and the public don't hear the word evolution from us, the science teachers, who are they going to hear it from?" Do we have an obligation to SCIENCE to teach it to our audiences?

I know we all have concerns about offending our audience, getting bad publicity from a program, and just generally wanting to avoid conflict. Is it okay to dance around the word 'evolution' and substitute other, less

threatening phrases, such as "change over time," "natural selection," "adaptation," or "Mother Nature's way?" Do we choose these other words, especially if we know our audience (such as a home school group) may be offended? Are we saying one thing to one group and something different to another? Or is this good interpretation? In Tilden's second principle we have a good fit with evolution. Information is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. At the very least, by using the term evolution in programs, we will be providing revelation (pun intended) to our audiences.

It may seem like I am looking for conflict and acting like a mother bear. I bring this up because these thoughts have made me re-evaluate a few things that I do and suggest better ways of doing them. A better explanation and/or definition of the word evolution could go a long way in resolving conflict when using the word. By prefacing my introduction with, "This is what science teaches..." or "Evolution as I am using the word does not address the origins of life, only how life has adapted and changed over time," I can feel secure about using the term. After all, I give evolution two opposable thumbs up!



The Great Kiosk Cop-Out

By S.F. Jones

There's a thing to remember at Prairie Creek Park,
When you're working the kiosk in daytime or dark,
For whatever the question, return this remark:
"You simply can't get there from here."

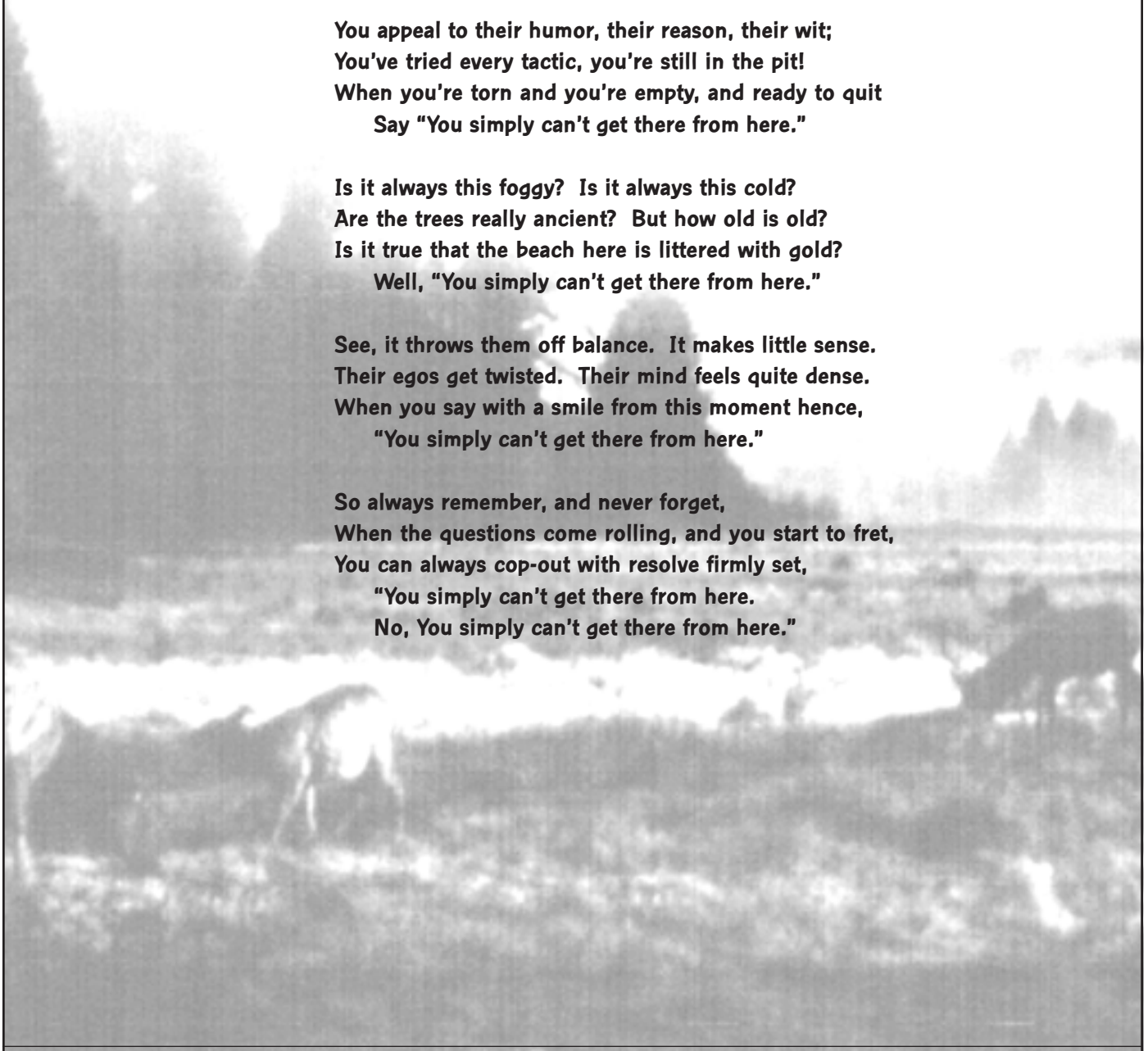
Can we see any elk? Where's the Drive-Thru Tree?
Do you have any sites? Is there anything free?
Your sign says you're full, but what about me?
"You simply can't get there from here."

You appeal to their humor, their reason, their wit;
You've tried every tactic, you're still in the pit!
When you're torn and you're empty, and ready to quit
Say "You simply can't get there from here."

Is it always this foggy? Is it always this cold?
Are the trees really ancient? But how old is old?
Is it true that the beach here is littered with gold?
Well, "You simply can't get there from here."

See, it throws them off balance. It makes little sense.
Their egos get twisted. Their mind feels quite dense.
When you say with a smile from this moment hence,
"You simply can't get there from here."

So always remember, and never forget,
When the questions come rolling, and you start to fret,
You can always cop-out with resolve firmly set,
"You simply can't get there from here."
No, You simply can't get there from here."



They're tomorrow's bird for all the right reasons, says a loyal employee

Count on Crows

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Gray Whale Deaths on the Rise?

By Greg Holm,
Redwood National Park

Last year, four gray whales (*Eschrichtus robustus*) washed up onto the beaches of Redwood National and State Parks. In previous years, this would have represented 25 percent of the yearly statewide total, as California averaged 16 gray whale deaths annually from 1990-98. However, in 1999 a total of 47 gray whales washed up along the California coast, and that number increased to 60 during 2000.

Marine biologists, whale watchers, and concerned citizens have all been pondering the cause of such a dramatic increase in gray whales perishing. Are the deaths part of a natural cycle, or could they be related to human activities along the coastline or in the open ocean?

Food Theory No. I

According to Joseph Cordaro, National Marine Fisheries Service Stranding Coordinator, there are two prominent food-related theories about gray whale deaths

currently being debated within the scientific community. Some researchers believe that the El Nino events of 1998-99 may have affected the whales' food supply. Warmer water temperatures may have killed many organisms at the lowest trophic levels, which in turn decreased food sources that whales depend upon.

Are the deaths part of a natural cycle, or could they be related to human activities along the coastline or in the open ocean?

Food Theory No. II

Other marine researchers feel that the gray whale population may be at or near the ocean's carrying capacity for these animals, and are therefore dying due to competition for a limited amount of food. In 1990, the

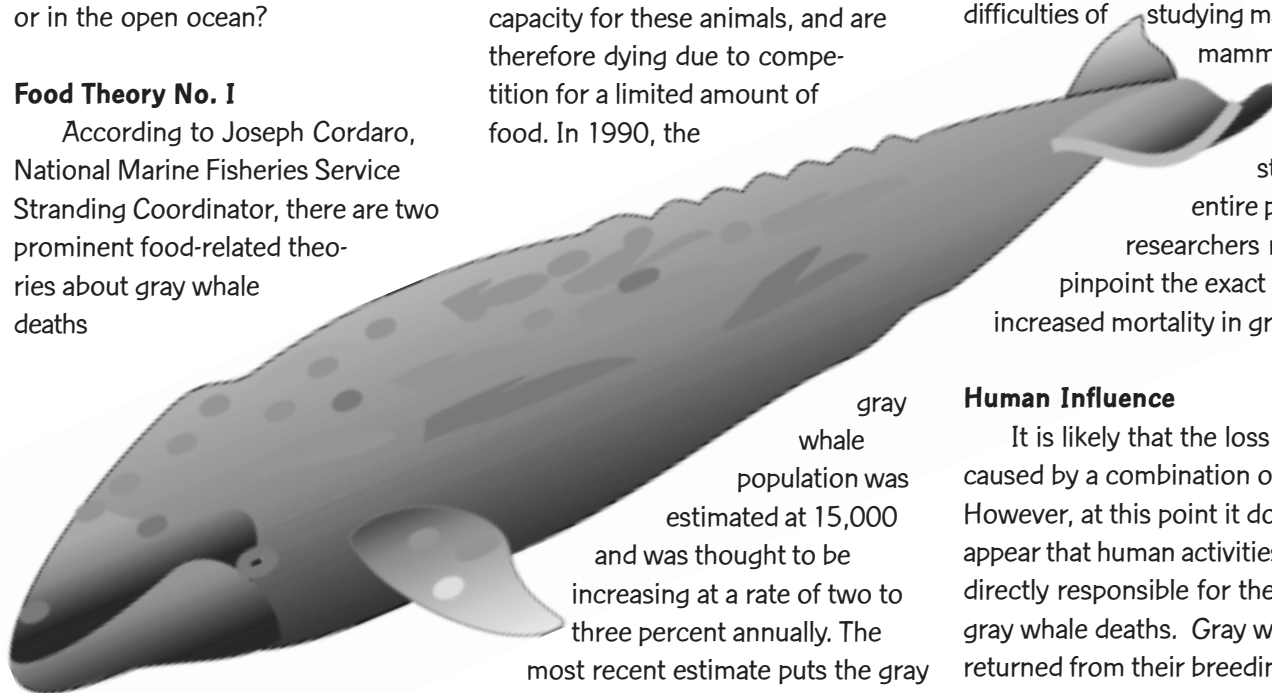
that there are too many gray whales for the ocean to feed them all

Many of the gray whales that died during 2000 appeared to be very thin. This could support either food-related theory, since they both point toward starvation for gray whales.

Further information is needed to reliably determine why more gray whales are turning up dead on California's beaches. Due to the great distances that gray whales travel, the difficulties of studying marine mammals, and the impossibility of studying the entire population, researchers may never pinpoint the exact cause of increased mortality in gray whales.

Human Influence

It is likely that the loss of life was caused by a combination of factors. However, at this point it doesn't appear that human activities were directly responsible for the recent gray whale deaths. Gray whales have returned from their breeding grounds in Baja, CA and are now migrating north again along the shoreline.



gray whale population was estimated at 15,000 and was thought to be increasing at a rate of two to three percent annually. The most recent estimate puts the gray whale population at 21,000. Evidence of a decrease in calf production in recent years also supports the theory

California's Tapestry

A Section of *The Catalyst*

Office of Community Involvement

Issue #14 - Summer 01

**The Tapestry is on summer vacation.
Watch for it in the next issue!**



Submit articles and comments to: Jack K. Shu, Park Superintendent,
OCI- Southern California, c/o Southern Service Center, 8885 Rio San
Diego Drive, San Diego 92108, Ph# (619) 220-5330.

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